

# Finding Meaning in Meaningful Use

Insights into Achieving EMR Success



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The movement to electronic medical records (EMR) is a critical focus for U.S. hospitals. Yet the passage of healthcare reform has changed the game and accelerated the need for change with unprecedented incentives and penalties that encourage hospitals to implement, utilize and demonstrate “meaningful use” of EMR.

## Responding to meaningful use

Accenture estimates that nearly 90 percent of hospitals over the next three years will make investments to install or upgrade their EMRs to meet meaningful use requirements. This will be a significant challenge for several reasons, including:

- Time and money. Accenture estimates that for the average 500 bed hospital, a complete EMR implementation requires an investment of approximately \$50 million and can take at least four years.
- Incentive possibilities. Hospitals want to find the best ways to leverage meaningful use incentives in the HITECH Act.
- Looming penalties. Medicare-based penalties—estimated at \$3 to \$4 million per annum for a 500 bed hospital—are steep and are weighing on hospital executives.
- Total transformation. An EMR implementation is more than an investment in a new system. It demands significant change in how people, processes—and even organizational cultures—work.

## Learning from EMR leaders

With such sweeping change on the horizon for U.S. hospitals, the fundamental question is clear. How can hospitals make the most of their EMR investment in light of meaningful use?

Accenture's recent survey of the CIOs of 15 leading U.S. health systems—ranging in revenue from \$1 to \$15 billion—offers some answers. Each of these health systems had a mature EMR and nearly all expected to achieve meaningful use by 2011. Our survey revealed five key insights about the EMR journey:

### 1. It takes longer—and costs more.

Most major health systems underestimated the time and costs associated with implementing advanced EMR functions by nearly 100 percent. Among those surveyed, the average time required to reach HIMSS Stage 6 was seven years, roughly double expectations at the onset. Expectations regarding IT operating expenses to achieve maturity were 1 percent lower than what was realized.

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## 2. The war for health IT talent is on.

There is a significant gap of qualified health IT resources to address expected EMR implementation and support demand. Nearly every CIO interviewed noted unfilled positions and shared concerns about sourcing enough talent from the marketplace, including from EMR vendors.

## 3. Expect spikes in IT operating costs.

Benchmarking highlighted that hospitals experienced an 80 percent increase in IT operating expenses over the course of the EMR journey. Moreover, IT operating expenses as a percentage of the overall operating budget increased nearly 1.8 percent. These spikes are significant and require management's confidence, alignment and commitment.

## 4. Supporting EMR means thinking differently.

Hospital CIOs noted the need to think differently about requisite capabilities to support front-line EMR users as well as to drive optimization of EMR-derived data through analytics. The average hospital experienced a 45 percent increase in full time employee support as they reached mature levels of functionality and adoption. In addition, Accenture data showed a change in skills and background with mature EMR users utilizing more clinically trained resources for EMR support and optimization.

## 5. Creating a culture for adoption is essential.

To achieve meaningful use and demonstrate patient care improvements, 75 percent of the clinicians in a hospital must be consistently using the advanced EMR components. Every CIO interviewed talked about the "over investment" required in change management and engagement to ensure that key stakeholders, particularly physicians, are aligned and see the benefit of EMR tools.

## Moving to high performance

The results of our EMR survey affirm Accenture's experience working with clients on EMR implementations in the United States and the world over. While the challenges are daunting, the right EMR investment can bring countless benefits to hospitals, physicians and patients.

What makes our approach different is that Accenture has the real-world experience, resources and capabilities to work with hospitals at all phases of their EMR journey—including implementation, adoption and support. We bring a unique combination of clinical know-how, business and analytics understanding and technology leadership to help accelerate results.

We never look at EMR as technology for technology's sake, but understand EMR transformation within the broader context of all the elements that drive adoption and long-term success. This unique background means that Accenture is able to design, build and run EMR solutions 30 percent cheaper and faster than the average hospital IT organization.

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## For more information

To learn more about how Accenture can help hospitals achieve meaningful use and EMR success, please visit [www.accenture.com/health](http://www.accenture.com/health) or contact Melissa Laughlin at [melissa.m.laughlin@accenture.com](mailto:melissa.m.laughlin@accenture.com).

## About the Author

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## Accenture: Insight Driven Health

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